

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 057 671

FL 002 762

AUTHOR Ruplin, Ferdinand A.
TITLE Consistency, the Hobgoblin of the Petty Mind or In Support of Eclecticism.
PUB DATE 27 Nov 71
NOTE 11p.; Speech presented at the annual meeting of the American Association of Teachers of German, Chicago, Illinois, November 27, 1971

EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.65 HC-\$3.29
DESCRIPTORS College Language Programs; Colleges; *Computer Assisted Instruction; Computer Oriented Programs; *German; Individualized Instruction; Instructional Innovation; Language Instruction; Modern Languages; Multimedia Instruction; *Program Descriptions; Programed Instruction; *Second Language Learning; Teaching Machines; *Teaching Methods

ABSTRACT

Beginning with a review of current student attitudes on the campus toward foreign languages, language teachers, and teaching methods, this article discusses the nature and success of a computer-assisted instructional program in German under development since 1965 at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, Long Island. The multi-media program for beginning students is outlined and includes sample materials. Comments made by students concerning their experience with the computer are included. Innovative approaches for use in further refinement of individualized language programs of this type are suggested. (RL)

ED057671

Consistency, the Hobgoblin of the Petty Mind
or

In Support of Eclecticism

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION
& WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED
EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR
ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF
VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECES-
SARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDU-
CATION POSITION OR POLICY.

This is the age in which the student no longer receives a grade unless, of course, he specifically requests one. On the other hand, the professor receives a grade from his students as do the various adjuncts of the course, in our case the text, the language lab and the syllabus. The results of this grading have been interesting even if not at all encouraging; the language lab is boring, the text is useless and the audio-lingual method (for example) stinks. The teachers are great people, humanistic and full of heart, but--alas--under the thumb of the establishment hierarchy. The establishment dictates a method and an objective which it learned from military language training during that great war (the dates are obscure) a generation or so ago. The teacher is another cog in the technocratic machinery.

This appraisal is--perhaps--somewhat exaggerated. Nonetheless, student surveys have shown us that we lack "relevance." Without bothering to define this over-used word, suffice it to say that students are not exactly standing in line to take language courses. Ours is not to question the perfidy of the administration in abolishing language requirements or the immaturity of the students in not knowing that "the acquisition of a foreign language . . . presupposes that the learner . . .

FL002762

becomes familiar with a new semantic system, a new way of thinking and feeling"¹ and that this is good. We have to provide a product which is more marketable although we know that it is a good one.

This is why we are here today--to discuss "new and neglected programs," not to proliferate programs or to proselytize our colleagues, but rather to try to meet the diverse needs of our students--those who want to read German only to study Rilke's metaphors, those who are 8 years old, those who might become Germanists, those who only want to attend a graduate school so old-fashioned as to require a foreign language for admission, those with perfect pronunciation who want to understand the words of the "Lieder" they have been singing for many years and those who need an extra course to fill the gap created by the closed Anthro. 101 course. All these motives are justifiable although none is the same as the professional motive, "self enrichment." Of this panel only Miss Sonnenberg can pretend to the latter since she is dealing with those wonderful 8 year olds. Her only problem is the politician.

What we at Stony Brook are attempting to do is to provide a program as varied as possible, albeit within the lockstep framework of the present course structure. We do not recommend that you use our program--you must meet your own needs--but, rather, we recommend that you do what we have done: have fun with the curriculum and with the students; how much German they learn is up to them anyway.

¹

Paul A. Gaeng, Introduction to the Principles of Language. New York: Harper and Row, 1971, p. 139.

Our program began in the fall of 1965 as an experimental self-study program in CAI (computer assisted instruction) carried out by volunteers. CAI is now a component of German 111, 112 ("Elementary German"), the catalogue description of which is "An introduction to spoken and written German, stressing pronunciation, speaking, comprehension, reading, writing and culture. The course consists of three hours in a small section conducted in German, one hour in a group (plenary) section taught by a contrastive linguist and two lab hours (one computer-assisted and one audio passive)." We have television (the "Guten Tag" series), guests in the recitation sections and movies. When possible the assignments are to watch a TV program, go to a play or read a book. If you are interested in statistics, our students are learning more although we are² "teaching" less, at least in traditional terms.

Our program is neither new nor neglected. As I mentioned before we have been in operation with CAI since 1965. CAI alone costs a great deal to run. We bought the Guten Tag television package, have a special lecture room with closed circuit TV, use an invisible ink process in the text and lab manual for immediate reinforcement and/or confirmation and have an average teaching load of 7 1/2 hours per week. Our students are interested--all volunteers since the 50% reduction in enrollment following the abolition of the language requirement. We have described our program in the German

² Based on testing results using the MLA-Cooperative Foreign Language Test (German), ETS, Cooperative Test Division, Princeton, N.J.

Quarterly of January 1968, the Modern Language Journal of March 1970 and the Northeast Conference Reports of 1971. In addition we have "performed" at ACTFL, local AATG meetings, before the NYSAFLT in Buffalo, etc. (The pièce de resistance seems to be the computer. The toy syndrome works more strongly on members of the profession than on the students.) As stated above, we have not been neglected.

I will not go into great detail describing our "toys" since they are adequately described in the articles referred to previously. In brief, the components are as follows:

Computer assisted instruction: The students sit before a typewriter through which they communicate with the computer. The computer communicates with the students on a small TV screen on top of the typewriter. The student performs a task and the computer tells him if he is right or wrong. If he is wrong the computer tells him where and asks him to correct his error. Types of tasks the computer requests are substitution-transformation drills, rewrite drills, sentence ordering and translation.

HANDOUT SHOWING CAI PROCESS³

Screen Image A	COMBINE THE SENTENCES IF THE SECOND SENTENCE SHOWS PRESENT TIME, USE THE PRESENT PARTICIPLE: IF IT SHOWS PAST TIME, USE THE PAST PARTICIPLE.	The task is outlined on the screen. After read- ing, the student mechan- ically proceeds with Item 1.
Screen Image B	DIE BLUMEN SIND SCHÖN. MAN HAT SIE GUT GEPFLEGT. DIE GUT GEPFLEGTE BLUMEN SIND SCHÖN.	Item 1. The student studies the item and responds. The student response contains an error.
Screen Image C	DIE GUT GEPFLEGTE BLUMEN SIND SCHÖN. DIE GUT GEPFLEGTEN BLUMEN SIND SCHÖN. R	The computer scans the response and fills errors with blanks. The student corrects his error. The computer confirms r(ichtig).
Screen Image D	MAN SAGT, DAß ... MAN SAGT, DAß DIE GUT GEPFLEGTEN BLUMEN SIND SCHÖN.	Item 2. The student response con- tains an error.
Screen Image E	MAN SAGT, DAß DIE GUT GEPFLEGTEN BLUMEN _____ MAN SAGT, DAß DIE GUT GEPFLEGTEN BLUMEN SCHÖN SIND. R	The computer scans the re- sponse and fills errors in with blanks. The student corrects his error. r(ichtig).

³
Reports of the Working Committees, Northeast Conference, 1971, p. 117.

After each exercise the student may make a suggestion or a comment. Some typical student comments are

Positive:

"You are a ridiculously slow machine, but I think I like you anyway."

"Good exercise."

"This was the best way to learn any language, besides which it was fun."

"See you next week for Anthro. Hasta la vista! Your humble and obedient servant, Dave Diner."

"Mr. Russell, have a nice vacation."

"For a change the mods were all comprehensible (sic)."

"Auf Wiedersehen, Herr Komputer."

Negative:

"Listen, you computer--You are moving awfully slow. When I give a command, you must obey!"

"Move faster or there is no Thanksgiving turkey for you."

"I don't remember learning adjective endings."

"Help--I am being held prisoner by a sex-starved CAI machine."

"Good-bye, you piece of tin."

The student spends about 1 hour per week at the machine. He may proceed at his own pace; he may also skip units (not exercises) if he performs well. On the average CAI rates a "B+."

Conventional language lab: Using a programmed language lab manual the student works twice a week for 25 minutes in the language lab. For pedagogical as well as technical reasons the lab work is passive and cognitive. The exercises are substitution-transformation, question answer, listening comprehension and "Nacherzählung."

The Conversational Past^t

MODEL

Das Kind läuft schnell.
Er springt ins Wasser.
Er ist schon da.
Er bleibt den ganzen Tag hier.

Das Kind ist schnell gelaufen.
Er ist ins Wasser gesprungen.
Er ist schon da gewesen.
Er ist den ganzen Tag hier geblieben.

1A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ 2A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ 3A ☐ B ☐ C

Frame 4 Listen to the speaker. Then change the sentences to the conversational past.

LISTEN

Er fährt in die Stadt.

Wir fahren in die Stadt.

Er kommt nach Hause.

Die Gläser fallen auf den Boden.

Der Schauspieler tritt auf die Bühne.

Die Blumen wachsen schon.

Wir laufen schnell.

Das Kind fällt aufs Gras.

RESPOND

Er ist in die Stadt gefahren.

Wir [] in die Stadt gefahren.

Er [] nach Hause gekommen.

Die Gläser sind auf den Boden [].

Der Schauspieler [] auf die Bühne [].

Die Blumen [] schon [].

Wir [].

Das Kind [].

FIGURE 7. Typical exercise from the laboratory manual used at SUNY at Stony Brook. The model is recorded on the tape and establishes the exercise pattern for the student. The multiple choice boxes go with short quiz items which occur from time to time during the course of the frame. When this happens, the drill is interrupted, and the student checks the appropriate box (A, B or C) with his special pen. A black dot emerges if the correct box is touched. The items labeled LISTEN provide the stimuli for the drill, and the items labeled RESPOND are the reinforcements. The tape recorded reinforcement provides the student with the complete correct response; the reinforcement in the book becomes visible when touched with the special pen i.e., Wir [] in die Stadt gefahren when touched by the pen becomes Wir [sind] in die Stadt gefahren, Er [] nach Hause gekommen becomes Er [ist] nach Hause gekommen, etc. This technique provides both audio and orthographic reinforcement and can be used in a variety of ways at the discretion of the teacher. [© 1969 by Appleton-Century-Crofts/New Century, Education Division, Meredith Corporation, Ferdinand A. Ruplin and John R. Russell, Basic German, 197.]

Student comment here is also interesting. In the Teacher Evaluation Survey of courses offered during the Fall Semester of 1969 the student editors saw fit to comment separately on two favorite components of the academic establishment, faculty advising and language labs (exclusive of CAI). At the risk of being tedious, I quote verbatim:

"Question 'A' on the questionnaire dealt with language labs. The question was worded: 'How useful was the language lab you took last semester?' Of the 127 persons who responded that they had taken a lab in the previous (FALL) semester, the following is the breakdown of percent:

a.	extremely useful	1.6%
b.	fairly useful	11.0%
c.	somewhat useful	21.2%
d.	fairly useless	28.4%
e.	completely useless	37.9%

"These results are in keeping with those found in 1968 and 1966. In 1968, of the 735 who responded, the following is the breakdown by percent:

a.	extremely useful	1.6%
b.	fairly useful	3.3%
c.	somewhat useful	9.9%
d.	fairly useless	28.1%
e.	completely useless	56.9%

In 1966, although the question was worded differently, 64% of the responding sample felt the lab was 'a waste of time.'

"Surely the time has come for some constructive use to be made of the language labs. Only if they were made voluntary would they be of any use at all, and, as Robert Cohen points out in T.E. '68, the room made available could be used as a music listening room."

These comments were made prior to the introduction of our current lab program. Students of Elementary German now rank the lab "B-/C+."

The plenary session meets once a week. During the hour the students view "Guten Tag" for about 20 minutes and receive a half hour lecture on German grammar (in English). This leaves the recitation instructor to do drills, dialogues, word games, and

in general "rap" in German with the students.

Individualization is not the specific theme of this panel. It is, however, along with the abolition of the language requirement, a primary topic of conversation at our cocktail parties. It helps to meet the diverse interests, needs and capabilities of our "mixed bag" of students. And to provide as much individualization as possible is our objective.

The plenary session is set up to meet the reality that our students are adults and are capable of applying reason to the task of learning a foreign language. The conventional lab is a guided home study program. The recitation session, while the most important component of the course, is the least structured. The instructor may teach it as he sees fit. (German must be spoken--or sung, or drilled--however.)

The total program is eclectic. The outline for the course is computer assisted instruction and lab.

CAI presents all the prescribed morphological and syntactic points which constitute the core of an elementary German course. In addition the mid-term and final exams are given at the computer. (Although we give the MLAC at the end of each semester to analyze the progress of the course itself.) The student must work through the CAI program and he works at his own pace. It is conceivable that a student can master a semester's formal grammar study in several weeks.

With the introduction of cassettes and a machine check-out system in the near future, the conventional lab work will also be individualized. Here, too, the student will conceivably be able to complete the conventional lab material for the year in a matter of weeks.

Ironically enough, all these machines contribute to the creation of a very human course. If testing, grading and other administrative details are handled by machine and if the "core material" is handled by machine, the teacher is free to devote all his time to the students.

This brings us up to the present time. Each year we attempt to "innovate" after evaluating the results of the previous year's work and listening to the students' "non-negotiable demands." I see one direction in which we can head. It is not original but seems logically to follow.

At present I am attempting to convince my administration that we should "do" Elementary and Intermediate German on a contract system. A student now receives 14 credits for the first four semesters of language study. I would like to guarantee him an "A" for work completed, whether it be for no credit, for one credit or for fourteen credits. The machines can determine the group of students to which a student should be assigned and can also guarantee that he has mastered a certain prescribed block of work. The zealous student could complete 2 years' work in one. The not so zealous student could complete one semester's work in 2 years. Instructors could be assigned to the recitation sessions in terms of their basic interests and capabilities.

With such a system the standards would have to be high. We have already established "departmental curves" (based on our five year study) with which we could start. A student should be rewarded for his work in terms of time if nothing else; he should not be penalized for taking German even (especially) if he comes from an academically deprived background.

Perhaps this is all a bit idealistic; I know it is being tried elsewhere, especially in the public schools. Colleges are now developing special programs for the academically deprived, for independent study both in residence and off campus. My administration does not yet know about our plans for the future. Since we are not politicians, suggestions would be appreciated.

Ferdinand A. Ruplin
State University of New York at Stony Brook
Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages

Paper presented at the annual meeting
of the American Association of Teachers
of German, November 27, 1971 in Chicago,
Illinois.